

Syllabus for OLLI class: "Topics in Psychology" Fall, 2019

Tuesdays. 1:45-3:30, Paradise Campus

Instructor: Gail Knapp, Ph.D., J.D., PRP

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Psychology is the scientific study of behavior. Much of what psychology has learned about how humans and animals behave is important and relevant to our everyday lives. This course will explore some of these findings with an emphasis on how we can actually use what psychology knows to make our lives better. Topics will include learning, memory, communication, persuasion, problem solving, relationships, and perception. We will discuss how to be lucky, how to make choices, and what it really means to be happy. There will be presentations and hands-on demonstrations as well as discussion about what we do believe and what we should believe.

There will be a PowerPoint presentation for each class that includes active links to many online references. We will see some of them in class. In particular, we will see some of the short format videos (5- 10 minutes) that allow for plenty of time for discussion and demonstrations. I will email the PowerPoint presentations to everyone in the class who wishes to receive them so that, if you wish, you can explore all the videos and lectures that we don't have time for in class.

Topical Syllabus

- 9/17- Scientific psychology- what psychology is and is not.
- 9/24- Perception and Sensation- our senses and our point of view influence us
- 10/1- Memory- it doesn't work like a computer or a movie camera
- 10/8- Truth or Lies? We are skillful liars, and not as good as we think at detecting lies. Fake news? How can you tell?
- 10/15- Learning by association is a big influence in what we think and do.
- 10/22- Active learning: simple learning and complex problem solving.
- 10/29- How we are affected by the situation. Emotion and motivation.
- 11/5- Evolutionary psychology; cognitive dissonance, fairness and games. Groups and membership influence our attitudes and behavior.
- 11/12- Communication and how to have better relationships. Why are we so divided?.
- 11/19- How much choice is good for us? Final Game--With prizes!!

Bio for Gail Knapp, Ph.D., J.D. PRP

Gail retired after teaching psychology for 38 years in a Michigan community college. During that time she was vice president of the faculty association for 7 years which made her chair of the college's academic decision making body. She was also the author of two psychology textbook Instructor Manuals, and the advisor and Michigan state coordinator for the Phi Theta Kappa honor society for twelve years.

She moved to Las Vegas to escape the snow and ice, and because she had fallen in love with the city during a regular summer visit for an annual conference. She decided that if she was fond of the city in August, she would love it in January! After six years, that has been shown to be true. The conference was about the use of science and evidence to study the truth of claims. It is that interest that sparked the creation of the Scientific Skepticism class for OLLI that she teaches in the Spring. The psychology topics course also includes as much "hands on" learning as possible as we explore topics that are relevant for us at our age in modern America.

Her belief in active learning comes from her academic work including earning degrees in psychology: a B.A. from Stony Brook and M.A. from Hofstra Universities in New York and a Ph.D. from Michigan State University. She passed the examinations to become a professionally registered parliamentarian nineteen years ago, and occasionally serves clients by helping them with procedure at their meetings or with their bylaws. She teaches a course in parliamentary procedure each summer for OLLI. Currently she is the past president of the Nevada State Association of Parliamentarians. She is also the vice-chair of a national commission that is rewriting the testing for individuals to become registered and professionally registered parliamentarians.

Gail demonstrated her love of lifelong learning by studying for a law degree on the weekends and passing the Michigan Bar at age 62. She has been married to Lynn for 40 years, (although it was not a legal marriage until the Supreme Court allowed it.) and has an adult daughter with one granddaughter living in Michigan. She has taught the Perception v Reality (later changed to Scientific Skepticism), Topics in Psychology and the Parliamentary Procedure courses for OLLI during the past 8 years. She has volunteered for OLLI as mentor; was a member of the Film Festival committee, and has served as a member and chair of the curriculum committee. She was elected to the OLLI Steering Council in 2017 and has been re-elected as secretary by the Council this year. She was re-elected to the OLLI Steering Council last Spring, and was also re-elected as secretary.